

ORDNANCE CORPS
PICATINNY ARSENAL
DOVER, NEW JERSEY

405046

Walter K. Frankel, M.D.
Medical Officer
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IN REPLY
REFER TO



March 27, 1954

The Honorable
James E. Van Zandt
Member of the Joint Committee
on Atomic Energy
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

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Dear Mr. Congressman:

It is in relation to the reports in the New York Times of March 19 and March 28 about your criticism and actions related to the H-Bomb explosions that I take the liberty to address you.

It seems to me very significant that only reports of Japanese medical authorities, treating the exposed Japanese fishermen, for the first time have revealed the great number of components becoming radio-active after an explosion of an A & an H-bomb as it was stated in the New York Times report of March 26 by Harry Schwartz.

The reports of the damages caused by the March 1 explosion to a greater number of people are mentioning only as the causative factors "radioactive fallout" or "radioactive ashes" and since the beginning of the tests in the Pacific the Atomic Energy Commission has always avoided, clearly to define, which chemical substances were radioactivated and consequently had to be considered as the dangerous elements in the atmosphere in the immediate or delayed postexplosive period.

About this I had addressed already about 2 weeks ago the chairman of the A.E.C. Rear Admiral L.L. Strauss but as he is away from Washington I have not received until now an answer.

Already immediately after his appointment to this position by the President in a letter to him with my congratulations I had pointed out that certain chemical elements, permanently present in the atmosphere, by such an atomic explosion automatically would be radio-activated and would become a delayed but not less severe health danger for all the people exposed to such radioactivated airmasses drifting more or less far over the regions not immediately involved in the actual bomb disaster. I pointed out that with the steadily increasing destructive power of the future bombs the population in the closer or more distant neighbourhood of the bomb-damaged area were undergoing increasing health hazards.

In 2 letters by the chief and the acting chief of the "Department of Biology and Medicine" of the A.E.C. I was informed that my warnings and fears were not justified for many reasons mentioned in those letters.

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and the acting chief added in his letter--they were the answer to my letter to Chairman Admiral Graves-- that 300 of the best scientific brains of the country connected with the A.E.C. were permanently keeping an eye on all possible dangers deriving as an aftermath perhaps from such a bomb explosion and that some of them to whom my letter were submitted had informed me that my fears and conjectures were not substantiated.

Unfortunately I haven't the papers and correspondence yet at hand as I am since March 26 have on several emergency duty and my residence is in Newark but if ever you should be interested in it I am sure the respective departments of the A.E.C. can furnish it at once to you.

I mentioned in my letter as one of the most important chemical elements as present in the greenest part of all the elements which can become radioactive and is especially highly dangerous if, what is unavoidable, inhaled with the air in the iodine.

Whereas Strontium, Yttrium, and other elements are present in the air only in a very small amount compared to the amount of Iodine--all these elements are mentioned in the report of the findings of the Japanese scientists--the radioactive iodine is in my opinion one of the greatest importance and the greatest danger.

Since Oct 1947 I am trying especially to bring to find the interest of the different health-scientists and the studies and researches of the Iodine content of the air. This is based on the fact that at that time was pending before Congress the bill of Rep. Francis Bolton requesting that all table salt in the U.S. should be iodized as a prevention against goiter.

In an editorial of the Journal of the American Medical Association of Oct. 18, 1947 was the enthusiastic support of this bill by the medical profession asked for as no adverse consequence were seen. I reported to the editor that I had seen during my 7 years stay in Manila, P.I. in 1940 in few weeks 10 cases of severe thyroid gland disturbances for which as the principal factor after very difficult and careful search finally in all cases the use of iodized table salt which was imported since about 1910 to Manila, with all certainty was found out. I reported to the editor that the iodine content of maritime climate were in the average 10 times higher as in continental climate and that therefore the use of iodized table salt in ocean bordering regions in addition to the considerable increased intake of Iodine with the inhaled air could easily lead to hyperthyroid conditions of more or less severe health damages. I said that therefore the use of Iodized table salt in the extended ocean-bordering parts of USA in the East as well as in the West were not warranted and should be opposed.

Since 1927 I have been especially interested in the study of Iodine from a surgical

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and urological point of view and in the years 1931/1932 I was closely connected to researches done by Dr. Cauer for the Prussian Ministry of Health, in which Dr. Cauer showed and reported that the Iodine content in maritime climate as mentioned above were 10-30 times higher as in continental climate.

The Bolton bill was shelved; there is no legal request that all table salt in USA be iodized but all my endeavours to find the support of any health authority or agency for analyzing researches of the air in USA didn't see any results. But it is an astonishing fact that such researches were not existing in the scientific American medical literature until 1952. I was informed by the Vice President of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. Dr. Armstrong who had ordered a review of the literature on such researches by his medical department.

More important than the Iodine content of the air in relation to the intake of Iodine with table salt is this condition in relation to damages and severe health hazards in relation to the consequences of an A-bomb or H-bomb explosion as such an explosion automatically will radioactive all the Iodine in the atmosphere.

In December 1951 was reported in the newspapers that some time after an A-bomb explosion in the Pacific radioactive clouds were drifting over France. The reaction of the A.E.C. in relation to this fact was dismissing any possible health hazards. Prof. Albert Einstein conceded it. I wrote to Mr. Walter D. Thompson, Science editor of the Times that it seemed to me important in scientific researches to find out what were the nature of the radioactive matter and pointed again to the Iodine content of the air. What I had done different times before in letters to him in relation to the iodized table salt. I pointed out that the knowledge of these facts must be of greatest importance for an adequate Civil Defense in preventing, probably by masks, the exposed population as far as it had survived the initial blast from the inhaling of radio-active air. I mostly radioactive Iodine and I wrote also to his acting editor but I didn't receive any answer or a very much delayed one. Prof. Einstein's secretary informed me that the load of work prevented Prof. Einstein from answering an identical letter. That was in the first days of 1952.

In Apr. 1952 I addressed in the same question the Surgeon General of Public Health and asked him for his interest in the matter of Iodine content of the air in relation to the dangerous consequences of an atomic explosion for great parts of the population. I asked also for a grant of aid for researches of the different Iodine content of maritime climate and continental climate as my own resources didn't allow such researches. Some weeks later his office informed me that my letter were submitted to the U.S.A. Weather Bureau in Washington, D.C. which had answered that researches about the Iodine content of the air and the differences of the Iodine content in maritime climate and continental climate were not existing but the Surgeon General's office

added that funds for a grant in aid for such researches by me were not

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available. It is absolutely understandable for me why over such researches as proposed by me since now 2 years is always spread what I have called once in a letter to Mr. J. J. J. an "Iron Curtain."

Sir: you will understand that I am not an expert in the field of atomic fission and energy but I cannot believe in the physical or chemical explanation that all the elements mentioned in the findings of the Japanese scientists and enumerated above are deriving, as hinted to in the report of Harry Schwartz, A. T. Times of March 26, p. 5 are split-products of the uranium or plutonium elements of the H-bomb; it is my absolute and strict conviction that all these atoms are either deriving from the atmosphere, from the air, or from the soil charged by the blast.

Many other points could be discussed in relation to this enormous explosion, neither possible nor preventable by the 300 most brilliant scientists working with me. I will close the letter of the acting chief of the Dept. of Defense and Medicine of the A.E.C. to me has shown in answer to my humble suggestion, but this letter to you is already too long what you will find in relation to the accident of the scientist.

Only the remark you will see in your letter that you have said "that the Capitol and some of the other buildings were destroyed if they had been the target of the explosion."

There was the emergency of the day, I have thought about by such a disaster that would be a disaster to the city and the preventive measure of the city officials to prevent the subsequent explosions or accidents of the kind, I have thought about to save people in the blasted areas are reduced to a minimum without any real value. Therefore the spending of great sums of money for fire-fighting equipment of the usual kind, the supply of medical supplies, the installation of first aid stations, the supply of water, orders etc., etc. in areas where such a bomb exploded is nothing more than a waste of money and an unrealistic show for the cities and for an amazingly apathetic population. Absolute new ways have to be found for help and salvation. The centers from where they may be rescued are hundreds of miles away and whole fleets of helicopters or the only means to bring them to the blasted, burning and smoke-blackened areas if the air force has failed to rescue them. The only way to rescue them is on one or more great cities. How ridiculous will be the reference to New York will establish first aid stations in the Empire State Building. The enormity of the disaster in the Pacific has blasted also such non-sensical ideas and plans.

I would be obliged if you would be kind enough to bring this letter to the attention of Rep. Chet Polifield and Senator John O. Pastore. In case you would like to have me as a witness I would be gladly at any time at your disposal.

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With the earnest hope of my highest respects

Respectfully submitted

[Handwritten signature]
Colonel [illegible]
Major [illegible]

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